

Support Groups Helped to Cope With Alzheimer's Diagnosis

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Early in 2001, my physician husband was diagnosed with Mild Cognitive Impairment. While we were not entirely surprised because of his family history, we felt we were unwilling passengers on a ship adrift at sea. What do we do now? We went home upset and anxious, irrationally expecting to see signs of full blown Alzheimer's Disease in the upcoming weeks.

While we waited for the worst to occur, we were fortunate to join a MCI support group, facilitated by Helen Davies, at the California Alzheimer's Disease Center (CADC) located at Stanford/Palo Alto VA Health Care System. At this support group, there were others with whom to share experiences, coping strategies, and medication information. As a caregiver, I most valued the monthly breakout group of caregivers.

Today, eight years later, I carry in my head many of the lessons learned there and have frequently used those strategies over the years to ease my way. Today, my husband resides in a facility where he is content and well-cared for, though he often tells me he misses me. Thankfully, I am now able to participate in a different group at the CADC. Here, I receive support when I doubt myself, advice when needed, and have the opportunity to share my experience with others who are new to the caregiving role. Thank goodness the staff at the CADC have been by my side throughout this long and sad journey.

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